

Discussion Questions: February 11, 2018
Repentance and Forgiveness
Psalm 51; Psalm 32:1-5



MAIN POINT

When we repent, God forgives. Repentance and forgiveness are a part of God's grace working in us.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

How would you define "repentance?" Do you think most people in our community think much about repentance?

How do you know if repentance is real? What is the result of genuine repentance?

Who is one person in your life that you think truly understands what it means to repent? What kinds of things characterize their life?

Repentance is a heartfelt sorrow for sin, a renouncing of that sin, and a sincere commitment to turn from it and walk in obedience to Christ. Being a Christ-follower isn't just a matter of thinking and doing the right things and avoiding the wrong things. Foundational to being a Christian is a personal relationship with Jesus that empowers you to live for God and make decisions out of the leading of the Holy Spirit. Through the working of the Holy Spirit, we are led to repentance because we desperately want to keep the intimacy of our relationship with God, not simply because of a need to behave rightly.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ PSALM 51.

Psalm 51 is an example of genuine repentance. This psalm was written soon after David had slept with Bathsheba and sent her husband to the front lines of battle to cover up his sin. David was king, and didn't want anyone to find out about his sin, so he continued to sin in order to avoid confronting his original sin (see 2 Samuel 10–12). Nathan the prophet approached David and rebuked him of his sin in 2 Samuel 12, but David did not admit his sin initially. Nathan's rebuke helped David realize his need to turn from his sin and back to obedience of God. Psalm 51 relays David's prayer of repentance to God, and characterizes the heart posture of genuine faith and repentance. God desires that we take up this posture in our own lives so that we may have intimacy with Him.

To what attributes of God does David stake his request for forgiveness? How had David experienced these characteristics of God before?

What does David mean in stating that it was only against God he had sinned, when others were clearly hurt (v. 4)?

Which request of David's do you identify with the most? Why?

In verse 13, how did forgiveness change the way that David saw other people?

Often we trivialize our sin as “just not that bad.” We compare our sin to the sins of others and trick ourselves into believing that there is no need for genuine repentance in our lives. At other times, we try to hide our sin just as David did even though we know we are wrong. For the Christian, repentance is more than just a single act; it’s a lifestyle—a posture. We are able to take that posture because we are confident in the grace and forgiveness that God promises us.

What can you do today to take up a posture of faith and genuine repentance?

What fruit in your life can you directly relate to a time when you were genuinely repentant?

How could genuine repentance in our church impact our city? The world?

The result of living out the posture of genuine repentance is an intimacy with the Father and an undeniable light for Christ that will shine from within us and pierce the darkness in the world.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ PSALM 32:1-5.

Share about a time when you experienced God’s heavy hand. What was the end result?

Believers often experience such inner pangs of conscience when their sin separates them from God. We feel like the weight of the world is on our shoulders, but that weight may well be the loving hand of a patient God gently nudging us to confession and repentance.

The turning point came in David’s life when he acknowledged his sin against the Lord. He literally made known to God a sin God already knew, but David needed to confess it to experience the true joy of God’s forgiveness.

If God already is fully aware of our sin, why do you think we still have trouble honestly confessing it?

How does God’s grace and forgiveness encourage repentance?

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Do you struggle to believe that God can fully and completely forgive your sin and remove your guilt? Why?

Is there a past relationship or incident that might be keeping you from experiencing the forgiveness of God?

Is there anyone that you need to forgive based on how much God has forgiven you of in Christ?

What role are we meant to play in each other’s lives in terms of helping each other repent? How can we help each other assume this posture of repentance?

PRAYER

Spend some time praying silently as a class for a renewed sensitivity to sin and the need for repentance. Pray together that the Lord would grant honesty and receptivity to the rebuke of sin in our lives. Ask

that the Lord would grant eyes to see the sins in those around us so that we may rebuke the sin in love, pointing others to a renewed passion for obedience to Christ.

COMMENTARY

Psalm 51

This Psalm was written by David just after he had seen Bathsheba bathing on her roof, laid with her and impregnated her, and sent her husband Uriah to the front lines of war to die to cover up his sin. David is described by God as a man after His own heart, yet we see his sin in full display. It is an encouragement to believers to know that when sin is forgiven it is truly forgotten and our intimate relationship with Him may be restored! Read 2 Samuel 10-12 to get the details of David and Bathsheba's story.

51:1-6. After realizing the error of his sin, David appealed first to the mercy of God, even before he mentions his sin. No matter the monstrosity of sin, God has infinite amounts of mercy to lavish upon those with repentant hearts. He asks God to blot out his transgressions - this word in the original language is a judicial word. David realizes that he is guilty. He asks that his sin be wiped away and no record would appear against him, which is only possible through the mercy and grace of God. David was deeply sorrowful for his sin and committed to turn from it.

51:7-15. David asked God to clean him with hyssop, which was traditionally sprinkled into the water of purification and directly relates to the sprinkling of blood of Jesus in Hebrews 12:24. David asks God to not look upon his sin and to not remove the Holy Spirit from him. David knew that he had grieved the Holy Spirit by his sin, which had caused him to withdraw.

51:16-19. David recognizes that he cannot make satisfaction for sin, but that men despise what is broken but God does not. David knows that God alone can renew his spirit and redeem him through the forgiveness of his sin.

Psalm 32:1-5

32:1-2. King David began his psalm with a beatitude expressing the joy of God's forgiveness. The expression what joy also could be translated "O, the happiness of" and further stresses David's joy. David used several words to describe his failure to meet God's holy standard. These words also may describe our own sinful situations. The terms that follow mirror those found in Psalm 51: Transgression denotes a defiant rebellion against God's standard—one in which sinners deliberately cross the line God has established. Sin denotes falling short, missing the target, missing God's righteous standard. David used the word covered to mean "covered once and for all," that is, God would never uncover David's sin again.

David described the joy of the one who no longer had sin charged to his account. God had straightened out his life as David had lived in complete honesty. The joy of God's forgiveness also had brought to David an inner change of attitude.

Joy is a natural by-product of God's forgiveness. Forgiveness should also help us grow in our desire to serve Him. Our human nature encourages us to pursue that which will make us happy, but happiness can be elusive and temporary. Real happiness does not come from fleeting circumstances, but from knowing God and the joy of His forgiveness. As we confess our sin and receive God's forgiveness, we find true freedom and happiness. We also experience a greater desire to follow Him.

32:3-4. David described the terrible battle that occurred within his soul as he refused to confess his sin. He felt as if his body was wasting away due to the internal anguish of his groaning all day long. Outwardly, David tried to act as if nothing was wrong, but inwardly he knew his guilt. He also probably sensed that others around him knew of his sin. Almost certainly those within David's "inner circle" of leaders had figured it out. David's inward groaning of spirit finally became too much for him to bear, and he experienced God's forgiveness when he confessed his sin.

The Hebrew word translated evaporated also can mean "overturned" and aptly describes the churning of David's soul within him. The summer heat could be quite oppressive; temperatures might well reach 100 degrees or more in the wilderness of Judah and the Jordan Valley. Typically, no rain falls between May and September in Israel, so no relief is readily available from the heat. David's sin sapped his spirit as the summer sun sapped his strength.

The turning point came in David's life when he acknowledged his sin against the Lord. He literally made known to God a sin God already knew, but David needed to confess it to experience the true joy of God's forgiveness.

32:5. The Hebrew word translated hide also means "cover" and is the same Hebrew word used in verse 1. David might try to cover his sin, but only God could permanently cover it and deal with it. The words I said reflect the decision David made. He would confess his rebellion to the Lord. For David and for us, confession is more than admitting our sin. It involves seeing sin as God sees it and turning from it in repentance. The words You forgave me emphasize God's personal role in securing David's forgiveness.